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ME-A-8636

Chief, Foreign Division N

17 October 1951

Chief of Station, Karlsruhe

Operational

An Interview with General ~~Hessinger~~ file

1. General HESSINGER returned from his visit to the "Combino" maneuvers with a very favorable impression of all that he had seen. The American troops were in good condition, were well equipped and took the work seriously. This was true of both officers and men. General HESSINGER was also favorably impressed with Generals Hardy and Eddy, with each of whom he spent considerable time. He wishes to have it known that he does not subscribe to the view - which has had some circulation in Bonn - that the Americans are handicapped by obsolete weapons. Not all the tanks are of the latest model, but generally speaking, he found the equipment modern and good.

2. The negotiations in Paris are making surprisingly good progress, and a successful conclusion of the European Army planning may be anticipated by Christmas, if not before. Agreement has been reached on three standard types of divisions: Armored (with 300 tanks), Armored Infantry (with 90 tanks), and Infantry. The problem of the integrated corps offers several possible solutions and is no longer regarded as a stumbling block. The Germans were delighted when it was decided to have a rotating chairmanship of the Military Planning Group and the Germans, with the word Allemagne putting them at the head of the alphabetical list, were offered the first chairmanship. The fact that the Dutch have come in is also encouraging.

3. The outstanding problem in Paris at the moment is the question of national armies. The Germans are perfectly willing to forego a national army, but as long as the other powers, including France and Italy, insist on the retention of national units in addition to their European Army contingents, the Germans will insist on the same privilege.

4. General HESSINGER feels that the Bonn negotiations on the contractual agreement will eventually be satisfactorily concluded, but he doubts that agreement and ratification can be achieved before spring. This means that not much can be done about German contingents until summer. It is now generally assumed that the fall of 1953 is the earliest date at which the Germans could put combat-ready units into the field.

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5. He is deeply disturbed by the lamentable performance of the veterans' groups leaders and their effect on the whole revolitization picture at home and abroad. His more detailed views on this subject are given in NOLA-8626.

6. On the psychological side, he feels that the Occupation Powers have talked too much and too loosely about German sovereignty. He says that every reasonable German knows that certain controls must be retained and are, indeed, in Germany's interest. But the facts of the contractual agreement, as compared with popular German illusions about it, inevitably prompt the average German to question the Allies' good faith.

7. He is also concerned about indications from the United States, particularly in the American press, that the Americans are fed up with German demands and delays and are inclined to feel that it would be just as well, or better, to go ahead without the Germans. This would be all right, he says, if the Americans are content to keep six divisions in Europe indefinitely. But Europe cannot be defended with the Germans and the Americans both out of the military picture.

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